2: Covarrubias R-5 (1930-1933) 1938
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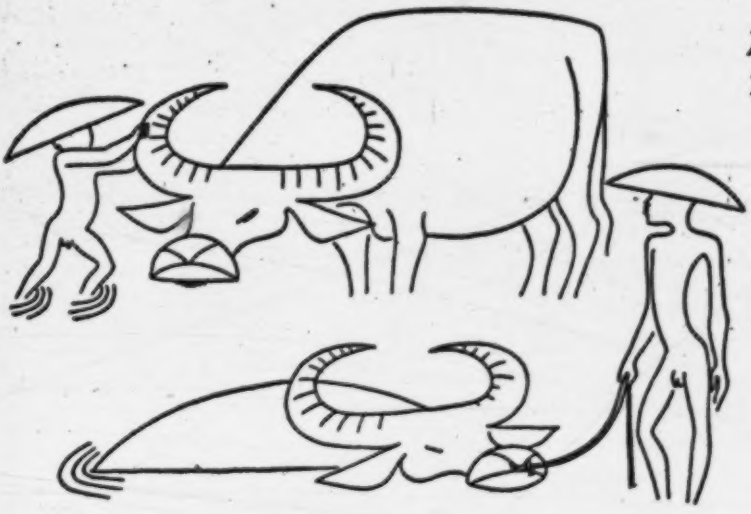
CHAPTER III



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THE COMMUNITY

THE VILLAGE

The capitals of the princes' districts, the seats of the regencies, are commercialized half-European, half-Chinese towns like Den Pasar and Buleleng; but the true life of Bali is concentrated in thousands of villages and hamlets. With their thatched roofs they lie buried under awnings of tropical vegetation, the groves and gardens that provide for the needs of the villagers. Out of the chartreuse sea of ricefields they surge like dark green islands of tall palms, breadfruit, mango, papaya, and banana trees.

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Underneath the cool darkness, pierced only by the shafts of sunlight that sift through the mesh of leaves, are the houses hidden from view by interminable mud walls that are broken at regular intervals by long narrow gates. All the gates are alike: two mud pillars supporting a small roof of thick thatch, giving access

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351 to each household by a raised doorstep of rough stones. In front of every gate is a stone bridge, or, simpler still, a section of coconut tree trunk to ford the deep irrigation ditch that runs invariably along both sides of the road.

361 A simple village consists of family compounds, each com-
[351] pletely surrounded by walls, lined on each side of a wide well-built avenue that runs in the direction of the cardinal points; from the mountain to the sea, the Balinese equivalent to our "north" and "south." The villages grew as they spread in these direc-
[491] tions, and the Dutch had only to pave the main streets and extend them through the ricefields to obtain the five-hundred-mile net of automobile roads that covers this small island.

363 The Balinese, being still essentially pedestrians, took good care to shade the roads with large trees, and every morning and every evening one sees the people in the streets, men going to work nonchalantly beating rhythms on their agricultural implements, or returning from the fields overloaded with sheaves of rice heavy with grain. Poised women come and go with great loads or shiny
[482] black clay pots on their heads. If it happens to be market day in the village, at dawn the roads are crowded with husky people from the near-by villages who come to sell their produce — piles of
[438] coconuts, bananas, or vegetables, pottery, mats, baskets, and so forth — carrying on their heads even the table that serves as a stand. If there is a feast in the village temple, the people parade
[292] in yellow, green, and magenta silks with fantastic pyramids of
[796] fruit and flowers, offerings to the gods, in a pageant that would have made Diaghilev turn green with envy.

291 Naked children play at the gates by the bell-shaped baskets
231 where the fighting cocks are kept. Each morning the baskets are
857 lined out on the street so that the roosters may enjoy the spectacle of people passing by. Small boys wearing only oversize sun-hats drive the enormous water-buffaloes, which in Bali appear in two colours, a dark muddy grey, and a pale, almost transparent pink,
231 an albino variety. A water-buffalo will not hesitate to attack a
857 tiger; their ponderous calm and their gigantic horns are awe-

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inspiring to Europeans, who have been told that their odour infuriates the buffaloes. They have often charged white people for no apparent reason, although the smallest Balinese boy can manhandle the great beasts. They love to lie in the water and be scrubbed by their little guardians, who climb all over them and hang from their horns when they take them for their evening bath. The buffalo tolerates the children perhaps as a rhinoceros tolerates the birds that eat the ticks on its back.

The Balinese raise a fine breed of cattle, a beautiful variety of cow, with delicate legs and a long neck, that resembles overgrown deer more than ordinary cows. Ducks are driven in flocks to the ricefields, where they feed on all sorts of small water animals. Their guardian is a boy or an old man who leads them with a little banner of white cloth on the end of a bamboo pole topped by a bunch of white feathers. This he plants on the ground and he can then go away for the rest of the day, sure that his ducks will not wander away. At sundown the trained ducks gather around the flag waiting to be taken home. When the duck-guardian arrives, the flock is all together, and at a signal from the flag, they march home, straight as penguins and in perfect military formation.

All Balinese domestic animals are rather extraordinary; chickens are killed constantly by rushing automobiles, but their owners make no provision to keep them from the road except the low bamboo fence that bars the house gate, and that is intended, perhaps, more for the pigs, which in Bali belong to a monstrous variety that surely exists nowhere else. The Balinese pig, an untamed descendant of the wild hog, has an absurd sagging back and a fat stomach that drags on the ground like a heavy bag suspended loosely from its bony hips and shoulders.

The roads are particularly infested with miserable dogs, the scavengers of the island. Most dogs are attached to the house they protect and keep clean of garbage, but they reproduce unchecked and there are thousands of homeless living skeletons, covered with ulcers and mange, that bark and wail all night in

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A Balinese home (*kuren*) consists of a family or a number of related families living within one enclosure, praying at a common family temple, with one gate and one kitchen. The square plot of land (*pekarangan*) in which the various units of the house stand is entirely surrounded by a wall of whitewashed mud, protected from rain erosion by a crude roofing of thatch. The Balinese feel uneasy when they sleep without a wall, as, for instance, the servants must in the unwalled Western-style houses. The gate of a well-to-do family can be an imposing affair of brick and carved stone, but more often it consists of two simple pillars of mud supporting a thick roof of thatch. In front of the gate on either side are two small shrines (*apit lawang*) for offerings, of brick and stone, or merely two little niches excavated in the mud of the gate, while the simplest are made of split bamboo. Directly behind the doorway is a small wall (*aling aling*) that screens off the interior and stops evil spirits. In China I had seen similar screens erected for the same purpose and once I asked a Balinese friend how the *aling aling* kept the devils from entering; he replied, with tongue in his cheek, that, unlike humans, they turned corners with difficulty.

The pavilions of the house are distributed around a well-kept yard of hardened earth free of vegetation except for some flowers and a decorative frangipani or hibiscus tree. But the land between the houses and the wall is planted with coconut trees, breadfruit, bananas, papayas, and so forth, with a corner reserved as a pigsty. This is the garden, the orchard, and the corral of the house and is often so exuberant that the old platitude that in the tropics one has only to reach up to pluck food from the trees almost comes true in Bali.

Curiously, bamboo is not grown within the house. If it sprouts by itself it is allowed to remain, but its growth is discouraged by indirect means. Such is the magic of bamboo that only old people may tackle the dangerous job of planting it or digging it out, and the first lump of earth dug must be thrown as far away as possible. It is said that if this earth touches someone, he will

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824 surely die, and it is only on certain days that work concerning bamboo may be safely undertaken. Yet life in Bali would have developed along different lines had bamboo not existed on the

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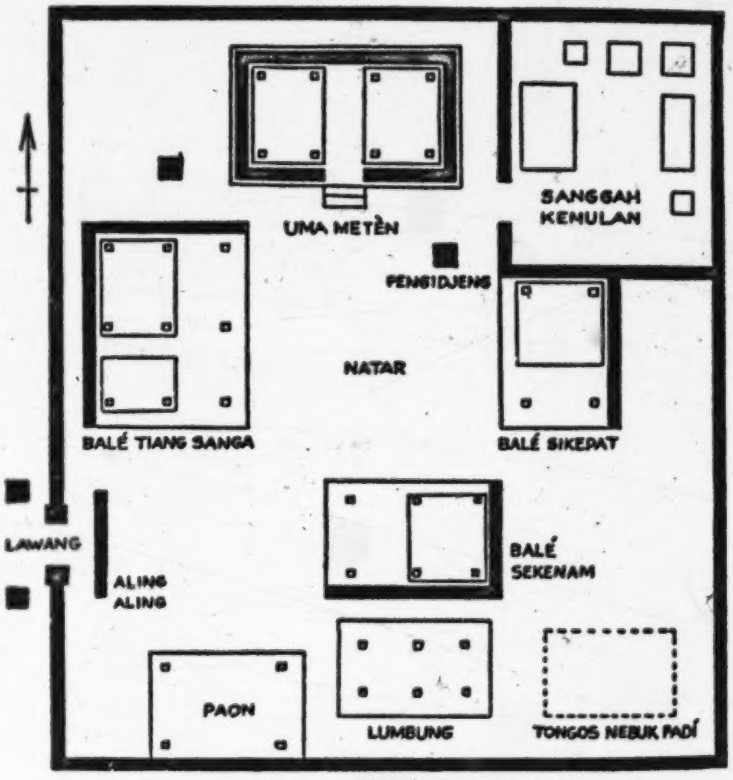

A Typical *Pekarangan* — Plan of Gedog's House

island. Out of bamboo they make the great majority of their artifacts; houses, beds, bridges, water-pipes, musical instruments, altars, and so forth. It is woven into light movable screens for walls, sun-hats, and baskets of every conceivable purpose. The young shoots are excellent to eat, while other parts are used as medicine. I was told that the tiny hairs in the wrapping of the new leaves are a slow and undetectable poison like ground glass

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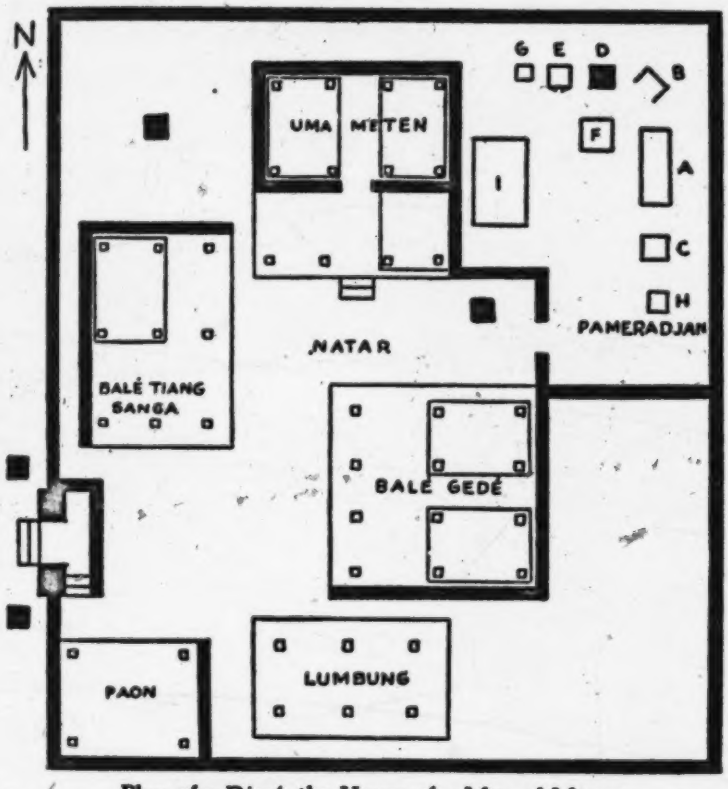
and tiger's whiskers. Bamboo combines the strength of steel with qualities of the lightest wood. It grows rapidly and without care to enormous size.



Plan of a *Djeró*, the House of a Man of Means

A — Kemulan
B — Padmasana
C — Mendjangan Selusng
D — Gedong for Gunung Agung
E — Sarén
F — Tadjok
G — Taksú
H — Ngrumah
I — Balé Piasan

Social and economic differences affect but little the basic structure of the home. The house of a poor family is called *pekarangan*, that of a nobleman is a *djeró*, and a Brahmana's is a *griya*, but these differences are mostly in the name, the quality

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342 of the materials employed, the workmanship, and of course in the larger and richer family temple. The fundamental plan is based on the same rules for everyone. Only the great palace (*puri*) of the local ruling prince is infinitely more elaborate, with a lily pond, compartments for the Radja's brothers and his countless wives, a great temple divided into three courts, and even special sections for the preservation of the corpses and for the seclusion [841] of "impure" palace women during the time of menstruation.

The household of Gedog, our next-door neighbour in Belaluan, was typical; the place of honour, the higher "north-east" 351 346 corner of the house towards the mountain,[1] was occupied by the 778 *sanggah kemulan*, the family temple where Gedog worshipped his ancestors. The *sanggah* was an elemental version of the formal village temple: a walled space containing a number of little empty god-houses and a shed for offerings. The main shrine, dedicated to the ancestral souls, was a little house on stilts divided into three compartments, each with a small door. There were other small shrines for the two great mountains – the Gunung Agung and Batur – and for the *taksú* and *ngurah*, the "interpreter" and "secretary" of the deities. In Gedog's house the altars were of bamboo with thatch roofs, but in the home of Gusti's uncle, the noble judge who lived across the road, the family shrine was as elaborate as the village temple, with a moat, carved stone gates, brick altars, and expensive roofs of sugar-palm fibre. Such a temple is not a modest *sanggah*, but receives the more impressive name of *pameradjan*. Noble people pay special attention to the shrine for the deer-god Mendjangan [825] Seluang, the totemic animal of the descendants of Madjapahit, the Javanese masters of Bali.

342 Next in importance to the temple was the *uma metén*, the sleeping-quarters of Gedog and his wife, built towards the moun-

[361] [823] [1] Endless ill luck would follow whoever ignored the laws of rank and built a dwelling at a level higher than a temple. The Balinese have resented the building of a Government rest-house on a hill above the holy temple of Tirta Empul in Tampaksiring, and our servant Pugog insisted he could not bring his wife to Tjampuan because the temple across the ravine was at a lower level than the house, and intercourse with a woman there could only result in a catastrophe.

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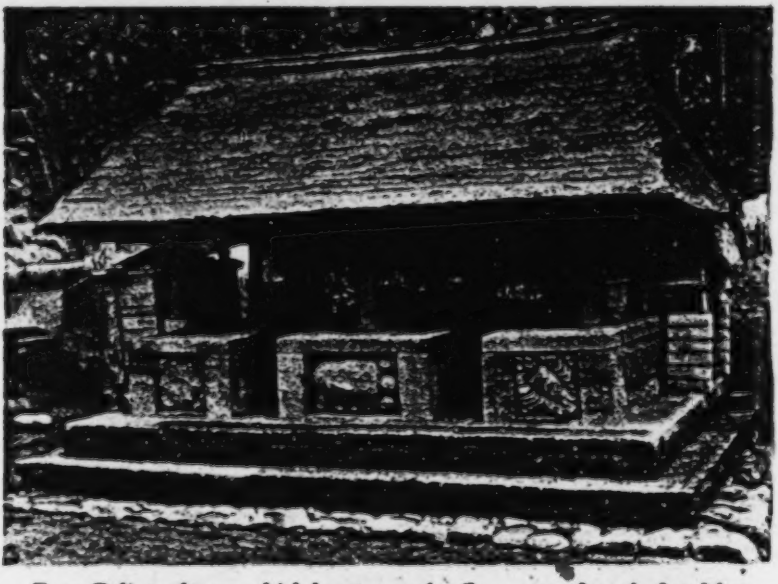

Every Balinese home, which houses one family or a number of related families in its many pavilions, is surrounded by a wall of whitewashed mud

Not all Balinese kitchens are as elaborate as this, with its carved stone ornaments of crabs, turtles, shrimps

[p. 406 (~~XXX~~)]

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children, who have no fixed sleeping places, but are apt to visit about with their elders.

In the balé siang-sangă, which is a sort of family sitting room, also without walls, a place is found for the younger brother Dog and his wife Rawi. There are three platforms, and the children may also sleep here if they please. When guests are spending the night Dog and Rawi give up to them the largest bed, on a slightly higher level, to do them honor.

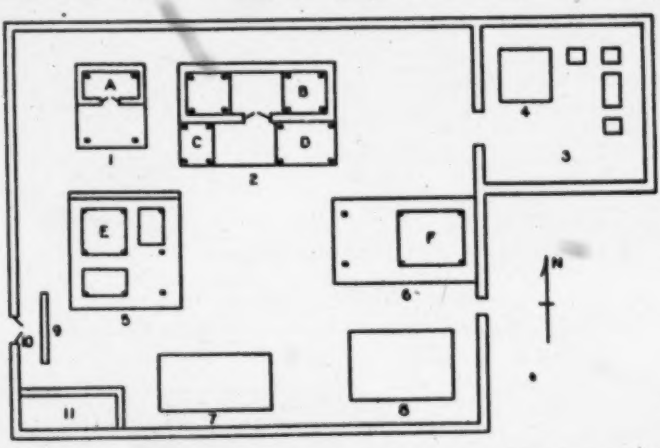

FIG. 4. Plan of the house of Rendah. 1, Balé Sākāpat, pavilion with four posts; 2, Metèn, house with inner room; 3, Sanggah, household temple; 4, Balé Piasan, pavilion for offerings; 5, Balé Siang-sangă, pavilion with nine posts; 6, Balé Sakanem, pavilion with six posts; 7, Paon, kitchen; 8, Djineng, rice-storing place; 9, Aling-aling, magic wall; 10, Kori, gateway; 11, Pigs. A, Koti; B, Dajoeh, Ngetis; C, Rieh, Tjeremé; D, Rendah, Adă; E, Dog, Rawi; F, Kintil, Dapet.

Koti, the eldest sister who was married and divorced, sleeps in a little room in the balé sākāpat, which is reserved for her.

The kitchen stands opposite to the metèn. East of this is the high pointed-roofed djineng, the rice-storing place. Behind are the pigs and fowls. Immediately opposite the entrance gate, blocking the court from the view of passersby and the attacks of evil spirits, is the aling-aling, a single strip of wall. The gate is a sort of stile, covered over by a thatched roof—you go up steps, through a doorway, and down more steps onto the roadway without. Cut into the mud wall on either side of the gateway are small niches used for offerings.

I [68 cont.]
342 over a middle section (3). There is little to say about the roof.

3. Van Hasselt, ibid., p. 154.

MI
342 It is often very high in proportion to the house. The shape of the roof of Malayan houses is peculiar. The ridge is concave in the middle and then runs upward into points at the ends.

We have said enough about the houses on piles and shall now briefly discuss houses on the ground.

d. Houses on the Ground, Their Layout

B
342 Before proceeding, however, we shall say a few words about
351 the houses of the Balinese. Dr. Jacobs reports that the houses,
364 umah, and yards are places for the collection of filth, unhealthy
417 and inhospitable sties. Fortunately, the Balinese spend a lot of time outside the house or sit and sleep in the pavilion pendopó (Bal. balé) in the yard, where many even spend the night. A Balinese yard, natah, is a large square surrounded by a wall, tĕmbok, of clay one and a half to two meters high. A narrow opening is the entryway [69] to the square, which is entirely filled with little houses made of wood or clay or kadjang matting and covered with atap, which represent the living quarters, as many dwellings as there are households, which usually all belong to
B one family. The space free of these little houses is filled with
231 garbage, human and animal excrement, piles of leaves, etc., and what is not eaten by pigs, chickens, and dogs wandering around stays where it is and gradually forms a dunghill. The huts themselves are small, stuffy, and low. Light enters through the door, and the cracks in roof and walls serve as ventilators. In the
B
342 center of the square, there is a kind of pavilion where guests are
574 received and where they sleep; this is the balé mambĕng, which
513 in cleanliness and decoration contrasts favorably with the rest.